All threats, even those made in jest, are taken seriously

After having traveled by air for over 12 hours the previous day, a man in a large, mid-western city approached a security checkpoint at the airport to begin his trip back home. As he was standing in a slow-moving line for the security processing, he commented to the person behind him, "The hassles of traveling by air today are enough to make a person want to blow up an airplane. If I had a bomb I'd use it."

Recently, at a manufacturing plant, an employee who was having a particularly perplexing day commented to a co-worker, "This place is enough to make you want to do what that guy in Mississippi did…blow away a few people."

Any of us who has ever flown knows the traveler made a big mistake, but many may not realize that the plant worker chose an equally poor circumstance to say what he said. In both instances, the people who made those remarks said they were "just kidding." However, they got to prove how good their "sense of humor" was only after being interviewed by security agencies and causing much turmoil for themselves and others.

Making threatening statements is never funny. In today's environment, the frequency of people actually following through on threats means that we must take seriously all comments made concerning violence. If a person chooses to use unfunny jokes about violence in the workplace, then that person must be prepared for the consequences.

Here at Hanford, the following events may occur when a threat is made — even if the speaker was " just kidding":

- Management and the Department of Energy's Richland Operations Office will be notified.
- An investigation will be opened.
- Management and security personnel will interview the person.
- Disciplinary action may be taken — up to and including dismissal — and a referral to the Hanford Environmental Health Foundation for a fitness-for-duty evaluation.

All threats, even those made in jest, are taken seriously. So please think before you speak. (See Security Ed Challenge.) ∎

"Oops! I guess I shouldn't have said that. . .!"